



DECEMBER, 1893. VOLUME 6 NO 2 (MN 62) PRICE 25¢ PER YEAR
PUBLISHED BY THE GANNETT & MORSE CONCERN, Augusta, Maine.

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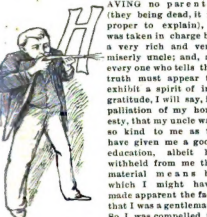
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W. C. Morrow, First Prize.
Harry Hunsletter, Second Prize.
Zach. Z. Zox, Third Prize.
Emma Herrick Wood, Fourth Prize.
F. M. P. Dear, Fifth Prize.

THE RUSTY SHOTGUN.

WRITTEN FOR COMFORT BY W. C. MORROW.

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gnaw my thumbs and wait for my good uncle to die and leave me his fortune. As he was a bachelor, and as I was his only heir-apparent, and as he had let it be understood that I should inherit his possessions, and as he was getting old, this waiting for a generous competency was not so irksome as might be supposed. But this complacent frame of mind was shaken, not very long after that most preposterous little wretch, Laura, came into the household.

My uncle, being in his dotage, imagined that he needed the consoling presence of a female human being in his house.

Now, a large acquaintance with female human beings in the shape of "college widows" had so hardened me against the genus that I resented, with all the bitterness of my nature, the intrusion of this most harmless and innocent of mortals.

She was an orphan, and only fifteen years old,—special reasons why I should have found it in me to give her, so far as my capacity would permit, those graceful consolations of human sympathy which her orphaned condition had denied to her. More than that, I should not have permitted my headstrong pride to plunge me into a resentful course which eventually destroyed even my hope of succeeding to the possession of my uncle's fortune.

To make all this clearer, I may explain that the following things happened in the order here set forth: First, I was disdainful of the child and contemptuous toward my uncle for having taken her up; second, my uncle resented both of these my attitudes, and displayed a steely firmness that surprised me; third, I left the house in indignation, and, finally, and went out to seek an honest livelihood; fourth, I became satisfied that my uncle would disinherit me and install Laura in my place.

All these things consumed a few years in the happening, and they but added to the sweetness and beauty of the gift. The shrewd reader will instantly reflect that the simplest and most practical course for me would have been the courting and marrying of the girl; and I propose to spring a surprise on you which doubtless will make the reader ashamed of his conceit.

When Laura was about eighteen or nineteen, and I had established myself in a way to be regarded myself as independent of my uncle's fortune, I was vastly amazed to receive the following letter from the beighted girl:

"My accident I have just discovered, through some letters written by you to your uncle several years ago, that I was the cause of the rupture between you; and I am, indeed, awfully mortified to know that you regard me as an interloper here, and that I am a disgrace to my right should become yours."

Cannot bear the humiliation that all this has brought upon you. Many things that happened long ago are now made clear to me. We shall never see each other again there is no reason why I should not be cordial with you and tell you how unhappy your treatment has made me. I should not befriend a girl who should not have been friends. I had never known a brother, and then, kind heaven forbid me both a father and a brother at once, I was the happiest child in the world. I can know then why you treated me as you did—I understand it now. I now believe that I comprehend above all things else is the degrading nature of my position. I am a disgrace to you for your uncle's fortune you and I might have been brothers and sisters. That I have been the cause of driving you from home and from your fortune, and, worse than that, have been the cause of depriving you of a father, I would rather have seen you dead than exhibit, as more than a hundred names, the course which I am determined to pursue.

I have just written my uncle a letter informing him of my discovery and intention, and I write to tell you of what I have done and intend to do, because I cannot bear to have any more of this quiet life. I will quietly step out of the place that I have usurped and that belongs to you, and I believe that in the manner in which

I have written to your uncle will induce him to restore you to that place.

"Laura!"—I could add "my dear friend." I am going where I can be in nobody's way, and I have no fears for the future."

Here was a second opportunity to secure the fortune; but the old spirit of perversity again assumed control, and my fortune got so bogged in me that it was not in me to let that girl suffer. I had surrendered my place through my own folly; in nowise was she to blame; and it cut me to the very heart to have her discover that a sordid nature had made a craft of me. I wondered if she realized how deeply she had wounded me.

After all (and this was a problem which my recently acquired experiences in business had enabled me to throw some light upon, my old uncle may have had no fortune at all. I was in a place to know about the revenues of rich people, and by no means could I learn that my uncle had any considerable income from investments. He had a few houses, the rentals of which yielded sufficient for his needs; but beyond them there was a trace of nothing whatever. A very old story (which I was unable to verify) ran to the effect that many years ago he had invested his money in diamonds, which he was supposed to have secreted somewhere. His old man-servant a fellow named Riggs repudied no faith in the story of the diamonds, as I took the trouble to ascertain. It would have been just like my old uncle to encourage a belief in the existence of his wealth, for he was a vain fellow.

Nevertheless, what he was known to have, though little, was now Laura's by right, and I despised it as much as I did myself. I could imagine the kind of letter that she had written him—it must have been cruel and womanly, but none the less true. I could see my uncle raging about the house, swearing at Riggs, and the house-girl, and the cook. I could even see him take the old single-barreled shotgun from the closet of the room adjoining his bed-chamber, as I had often seen him do, and hug it and caress it, and pretend that he always kept it loaded for burglars.

While taking a secret delight in all these mental pictures, I was losing no time in efforts to find Laura. By some unaccountable means her letter had invested me with a foolish sentiment on her account, though a kind Providence withheld from me an exact understanding of it. All that I thought I wanted was to find her, to make myself right in her eyes, to show her that I would go many a long mile to prove my friendship for her, and, if possible, to restore her to my uncle's friends. In my softened state I was even touched with pity for the old staid fellow. I knew that his heart was wrapped up in the girl and that her loss would nearly kill him. Therefore, without any waste of time I put detectives out to find the runaway, and for the course they soon discovered her.

I was gratified to learn that my uncle had taken no step so expensive—he had merely charged up and down with the old shotgun, and then cried like a child.

A sense of delicacy, which I am certain the reader would not have expected, restrained me from acting out all the details of my meeting with Laura. I had not seen her for a long time, and I was not about to show very clearly that she had grown. Whether or not our inter-

view developed a sentimental character, I shall leave it to the match-making reader to infer, my only caution to him being to beware of a trap of my setting. About all I care to say just now is that, after an excellent understanding had been reached, she, the carefully informed maid who she had left something at my uncle's house that she treasured highly, but that as she was fully determined not to return to him (having, in her opinion, burned her bridges in that direction), she was distracted over its loss.

Of course, that decided me to go and get it for her—that is to say, I would go and steal it for her; for I had been in business sufficiently long to acquire certain aptitudes, and besides that, I dared not openly visit my uncle's house. Laura tried to laugh my proposition out of joint; but when she saw that my intention was fixed, and as we both were feeling quite happy and daring, she fell into the spirit of the adventure, and proffered her assistance.

In her present quarters she was well content, there being no danger of her discovery by my permissive uncle. So Laura agreed to go with me in a buggy to his fence in the dead of night, and wait for me while I should go about the business of my burglarious enterprise, and then drive with me rapidly away.

It was a single-story cottage, and I knew every detail of its arrangement, including Laura's chamber. It would be a simple matter, I thought, to force her window in the darkness, enter her deserted chamber, take what I sought, and retreat undiscovered.

To the house, then, we drove, arriving about one o'clock in the morning, and I proceeded to work.

The unexpected happened. It had never occurred to me to think of danger from the direction of old Riggs—I had conceived my uncle and the single-barreled shot-gun to be the only means. It may be inferred, therefore, that I was greatly discomfited when old Riggs, shaking as though he had an ague, suddenly emerged upon a side porch as I was hastening away with the plunder, nervously baring the familiar old shotgun to his quaking shoulder, and blazed away at me with a roar that reverberated throughout the township. I was still more embarrassed to discover that his aim had been marvellously good, for the bullet I received from the gun's mischievous stroke me with so overwhelming violence that it sent me sprawling on the grass; and I thought that I was hurt to death.

I lay there stunned and bleeding, utterly unable to rise, and only half conscious of interesting things which were getting themselves to happen. Among these was the prompt and brave conduct of Laura. Seeing me fall, she sprang from the buggy, ran through the gate, and flung herself upon the grass beside me, saying things that sounded too pleasant to be listened to in half-consciousness. She raised my head and kissed me a number of times, and applied other and similar soothing and healing remedies, including tears. Then with a quick and vigorous energy she caught me around the body, under the arms, and began to drag me toward the gate, with her own hands of bundling me into the buggy and driving to safety. I was so weak that I could not doubt that she would have accomplished this task had not a

(Continued From Page 2.)

where she had fallen, in a dead faint, into my arms and was safe.

Reassured, and by the light that would not be put out! I know not what you may think, kind reader, but Alice and I know that it was dear brother who saved my darling from the storm that night.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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Our hero did not wait for further revelations, but hurried homeward as fast as a pair of rather long legs could take him. He determined to keep his gruesome secret to himself for a while; keeping, in the meantime, a surreptitious watch on the fellow Jessop.

ZANITA.
 WRITTEN FOR COMFORT BY F. M. P. DEAS.
 PUBLISHED BY THE GANNETT & MORSE CONCERN.

A little creature, with
pale face and big, e-

seemed to melt in
yours. But she had
been long in the trop-

than one in which a performer depends on his own skill alone. Your safety is in other people's hands as well as in your own, and if those hands can't help yourself. In this case, while the performer is all more or less responsible for the accident, the chief responsibility lay with the spectators.

"I want you to know," she continued, "I have been watching you pretty closely, and the

A second later, and he felt himself al

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This letter suggests a few words. In answer Mrs. C. O.'s expressed wish for some Shut-In folks, crazy, ill, and nearly little aging, I send, and am still having so many addresses in it is both impossible and useless to send to publish them all. I sent her in a personal letter those I thought the most available for her purpose, and I have copied the addresses of many more, together with what their

[illegible]

"I think I can give you a little information about stamps. There are stamp companies at bay cancelled stamps and pay from ten to twenty cents for them when they are whole, free from paper, slightly cancelled and fresh-looking. I can buy nearly a hundred sets of stamps at twenty-five cents for a thousand. I would rather send anyone ten sets of stamps than three years saving a thousand stamps for them."

HARBERT M. LINN, Mace, Ind., Box 12, writes:—"I would like to correspond with Whit-Insinger than myself. I was born May 31, 1876, and am blessed with health."

[illegible][illegible]

ute. Do not, dear cousins, be discouraged, for the good Lord will reward you. I send this reading matter as I have to cheer others, each love to the cousins."

W. H. WILLCOX, Ipswich, Mass., extends an invitation to all Shatt-Ins who desire to join in the "Sunshine Circle" to send him their addresses. This is an excellent plan whereby our friends in the "Sunshine Circle" may find both pleasure and profit, and I hope that many of them will avail themselves of it.

Mrs. MARY MCMANN, Blystone, Pa., Box 4, sends a note to be read to the "Sunshine Circle," and to receive a letter party Christmas day.

Mrs. E. E. M., (exactly the same address as above), sends the same request.

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we many people have been thrown out of work, we gettin' up an outfit that will bring many delirant people who have a little business of their own, home, hope, or place, but business has repositrioned. Women find many ways to use our skills and save much money doing the work them- sels at home. Nearly all make more than enough for the outfit the first hour. Some mother's that have been able to collect much money etc., etc., that has always given them money to travel to the cities. Young ones who want to start in a good, profitable business, cannot do better than to work one of these Boldering Outfits and set them- selves up on ones; it requires no capital whatever.

for the outfit for the first hour. Some mothers are their children collect injured dishes, etc., and sell them for a few cents. Some mothers have a business that has always given much money to large stores. Young men who want to start in a good, sure, profitable business, cannot do better than secure one of these Soldering Outfits and set themselves up at once; it requires no capital whatever. They can sell the outfit to their friends, and establish them to run a tin and fancy goods store of their own. The most successful merchants have started in this small way. Many men have given their wives and years of their time to learn a trade that will pay them well. Now, with this great outfit, you can sell directions we send you with this great outfit, and you can see how easy it is to make money by selling everything in the line of household wants. We send a complete set of tools, DOUBLED-POINTED AD-

enable them to run a tin and fancy goods store of their own. The most successful merchants have started in this small way. Many men have given their lives and years of their time to learn a trade that will directions we send free with this great outfit. We will send you a complete set of tools, including everything in the line of household wares, and a complete set of tools, DOBIE-POINTED ADJUSTABLE SOLDERING IRON, WRENCH for CHANGING THE SCAPING IRON, BAR OF SOLDER, RESIN and full directions for using same all paid for. We will send you a complete set of tools. The complete outfit will cost you \$1.00. Express paid, to any one sending a yearly subscription to COMFORT at 25c. per year, we will send COMFORT for 6 months on trial and outfit, all charges paid, for only 50c. Address,

TABLE SOLDERING IRON, WRENCH for changing the SCRAPING IRON, BAR OF SOLDER, RESIN and full instructions for using same, all packed complete in a strong sliding cover wood case. The complete outfit FREE, express paid, to any one sending a club yearly subscribers to COMFORT at 25c. per year, we will send COMFORT for 6 months on trial and outfit, all charges paid, for only 50c. Address, COMFORT, Augusta, Maine.

AND HER OWLS.

Contributors must without exception be regular subscribers to *Comfort*, and every contribution must bear the contributor's own name and post office address in full.

Original letters only, which deal with matters of general interest, will be published. They must be as brief, plain and correct as possible. Contributors should make them and may vary in length from one hundred to four hundred words. Only letters of exceptional merit and interest may reach 550. Contributors must write on one side of their paper only.

stationery, cards, etc., will be printed in connection with the respective letters, and new electrotypes of same will be mailed, post paid, to the prize winners.

1st.	For the best original letter	\$3.00
2d.	" " second best original letter,	2.50
3rd.	" " third " " "	2.00
4th.	" " fourth " " "	1.50
5th.	" " fifth " " "	1.00

Competitors for these monthly cash prizes must comply with all the above rules, and in addition mailing at least one new cousin into the COMROW circle; that is, they must send one new subscriber with each letter, together with 25 cents for a yearly subscription.

CASH PRIZE WINNERS.

Grace Jay White	First prize	\$2.00
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Will H. Gleason,	Second prize,	2.50
Edward H. Ziska,	Third prize,	2.00
Nellie E. Bennett,	Fourth prize,	1.50
Mrs. William Knoer,	Fifth prize,	1.00

PRIZE-MONOGRAM WINNERS.
James Unsworth, Nellie R. Bennett,

A MERRY CHRISTMAS and a joyful New Year to all the cousins; may you all prosper, and may our circle be trebled during the coming year! For although now we have a little family group of a million and more, there is always room for more. And so I hope thousands o

ew cousins will come in, and that I shall hear from
ou all! I am glad to present to you a new co sin in
most interesting letter. Historic Massachusetts

It is my good fortune to live in an old historic town in
New England town, Dedham, the shire town of Nor-
folk County, 'the garden of Eastern Massachusetts'.
And I have thought that some of the cousins might be
interested in its relics of colonial days. Of the oldest
Fairbanks house, which is the oldest now standing
in New England, having been built in 1536, no doubt,
you have heard a great deal: so I will say only that it
is occupied at present by a Fairbanks, who is a
many times great grand-daughter of our

Jonathan Fairbanks who built the house; and that it has never been occupied by a person of any other name and that every occupant has

exhibit something belonging to every past member of the family, and as the relics of each elder, every-thing in the way of old china, furniture, portraits, jewelry, and wearing apparel are there, making a collection which drives every lover of the antique wild with envy. On the main street of the town is an old stone, which looks not unlike a rough monument. It is in reality, the stone base on which a statue of William Pitt once stood, in honor of the great Commoner. However loyal to him the hearts

the early inhabitants of Jedham might have been, and however great their admiration, their pocket-books were not sufficiently well-filled to admit of their giving their hosts a meek, or a best, or a

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DEDHAM POWDER HOUSE.

[illegible][illegible]

"Tennessee is divided into three distinct sections as follows: Eastern, Western and Middle. Franklin County is included in the middle section and is next to the Alabama line. Winchester is the county seat."

The region is supplied with a number of good schools, and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville College for women, at Winchester; the latter is a fine home for pupils and is in the finest part of the city; rates only \$180 for a whole year, everything included dress and books. Then there is the University of the South at Swannock, and a number of several of the small towns. Two railroads have their termini in the county, and an electric railway is being built from Decherd to Louisville, which will furnish a fine opportunity for pleasure excursions. The people are very hospitable and generous. M. drudging labor is performed by negroes. Tennessee people are many of them moving to Texas, and the climate is much better than in the place where they are. There is many an excellent chance for anyone to get on for little or nothing at any time, and some splendid chances here in my own neighborhood to-day. The climate is the best in the South.

Mrs WILLIAM KORN, Huntland, Box 12, Tenn.

[illegible]

points of interest. After leaving the Welland Canal the boat proceeds direct to Cleveland, Ohio, on Lake Erie. From Cleveland the boat proceeds to Toledo, Ohio, where the Garfield monument and numerous other points of interest in one of the most beautiful and charming cities in the world. From Toledo the boat proceeds to Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan (opposite ports on Detroit River), thence up the river across Lake St. Clair, up the river of same name to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and thence to opposite each other. At this point the Grand Trunk railway has a tunnel under the river. Up to three hundred cars are loaded in the tunnel at a time. Leaving Port Huron we stop no more. Crossing Lake Huron through the Straits of Mackinaw, and Lake Michigan, we arrive at the city of Montreal, Quebec, half day after leaving Montreal. I will close by saying that we make about ten such trips every year, and if some of our readers would like a trip, or would like to know more, they can take a trip, or write to me. If you will let me know the pilotage you may possibly see yours truly.

JAMES UNSWORTH, 1815 Memphis St.

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